

Commemorative plans for '92 World's Fair

By Roger Boye

Special silver or gold coins might welcome visitors to the Chicago World's Fair in 1992.

"We're beginning to look at new [themes for] commemorative coins," said Curtis A. Prins, staff director of the House Subcommittee on Consumer Affairs and Coinage. "Two of the most promising possibilities are the 1986 centennial of the Statue of Liberty and the 1992 Chicago World's Fair marking the discovery of America."

Various promoters also want commemoratives made for several other events, such as the 75th anniversaries of the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts, the centennial of American organized labor and the 150th anniversary of the Alamo. But those celebrations probably won't merit special coinage, although the government might honor one or more of them with bronze medallions.

"Congress will be very reluctant to return to the era of striking coins for whomever has enough clout," Prins said, referring to abuses in the commemorative programs earlier this century. "The event will have to be of great magnitude [to earn a coin]."

From 1892 to 1954, the United States Mint produced 55 different commemorative coins, including pieces for such seemingly minor events as the centennial of the city of Bridgeport, Conn. In the last three decades Congress has authorized special noncirculating coins for just two occasions, George Washington's 250th birthday in 1982 and the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics.

Rep. Frank Annunzio [D., Ill.], chairman of the House subcommittee, has said that he wants to evaluate results of those two latest commemorative programs before considering proposals for other pieces. Thus, any bills in Congress for new coinage probably wouldn't become law until 1985, at the earliest.

● "He cared."

That's a simple inscription on new government medals honoring the late Hubert H. Humphrey, vice president and U.S. senator. The 3-inch diameter bronze specimens, which cost \$16 each by mail, duplicate a congressional gold medal that President Reagan gave to Humphrey's widow during ceremonies Sept. 11 in Washington.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Mint also is accepting orders for miniature bronze medals commemorating the Americans missing in action in Southeast Asia. Officials are charging \$2.25 each for the 1 5/16-inch replicas of larger bronze medals made for relatives of MIAs.

To order either medal, send a check or money order to the U.S. Mint [Medals], P.O. Box 500, Philadelphia, Pa. 19105. The mint will try to mail the merchandise within 60 days, according to a spokesman.